CHURCH NEWS

FROM THE NORTHERN COUNTRIES

Edited by
THE NORTHERN ECUMENICAL INSTITUTE
Sigtuna, Sweden

Director: Dr. HARRY JOHANSSON, Sigtuna, Sweden
Editor: Rev. JOHS. LANGHOFF, Øster Egesborg per Mern, Denmark

No. 68 April 18th, 1961.

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Northern People's Academy to be Established at Kungälv.

At a meeting at Helsinki (Helsingfors) the Ministers of Education of the Northern countries have resolved to establish a Northern People's Academy at the Swedish town of Kungälv. At Kungälv there is already a joint Northern folk high school, established 13 years ago. The two institutions are to be independent of one another and with separate managements, although probably situated on the same premises.

The Ministers of Education further advocated that young people wanting to attend folk high schools in other Northern countries than their own should be allowed, besides a special grant for extra expenses, the same public grants as in their home countries.

DENMARK

Roman Catholic Observers on the Ecumenical Youth Council.

In the last number of "Økumeniske Nyheder" it is announced that, following upon several negotiations in 1960, the Ecumenical Youth Council in Denmark has decided to invite the association "Danmarks Unge Katolikker" (Young Catholics of Denmark) to send observers to the meetings of the Council and to the rallies arranged by it.

It says in the announcement from the Youth Council: "For some years a certain improvement in the relations between the Roman Catholic and the Protestant Churches has been noticeable. It is especially encouraging to note the more sober and understanding language employed when speaking of the opponent. - Of course, there is still a long way to go until agreement between the two has been reached, and it may take centuries. But this does not acquit us of the obligation to take the first step. We must get in touch with one another and try to get to know and understand one another. This is what is beginning to happen here at home."

Writing on the issue the Editor of "Økumeniske Nyheder", Mr. Johs. Aagaard, University Lecturer, says that one should not believe, though, that the Roman Catholic Church has thereby joined the ecumenical movement. All that has happened is that some young Roman Catholics have felt a desire to join a wider fellowship than hitherto. And Mr. Aagaard emphasizes that in the ecumenical fellowship nobody is obliged to approve of the conceptions of Christianity of other

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people; on the contrary, one should discuss together also that which separates us from one another and argue against the supposed misconceptions of the others.

At the next ecumenical rally of the Youth Council, which is to take place in April, one of the items of the programme will be a report by a young Roman Catholic on the proposed Second Vatican Council.

Professor Skydsgaard Conducts Devotional Service for Anti-Nuclear Weapons Demonstrators.

The prominent theological Professor, Dr. K.E. Skydsgaard, has caused a certain amount of attention by agreeing to conduct a special devotional service for the participants in the anti-atom weapon demonstration march from Holbæk to Copenhagen during Easter week. The service was first planned to take place at Taastrup, but, owing to the church preferred by the arrangers being occupied at the desired time on Easter morning, the service was held on Easter Eve in the Cathedral of Roskilde.

As mentioned in the last number of CN, wide circles were most critical of the Social Democratic Minister of Church Affairs, Mrs. Bodil Koch, having accepted an invitation to address the demonstrators on their arrival in Copenhagen. There has been a sharp debate in Parliament on the matter, the Conservative leader, Mr. Poul Møller expressing his fear that the Minister's promise to speak might raise doubts as to the Government's policy, which up till now has been that disarmement must be mutual and controlled, while the aim of the demonstration, as far as he could gather, was to bring about a one-sided and uncontrolled disarmement in the Western hemisphere.

As the Prime Minister, Mr. Viggo Kampmann, did not want to comment on the matter, the Minister of Church Affairs replied herself that she had made her decision without having first consulted the Prime Minister. She felt that it would have been detrimental to the spirit of democratic freedom if she had refused the invitation. She was convinced that many young people were beginning to feel politically responsible in this particular matter and that their sense of responsibility ought to be encouraged.

Danish Delegation to New Delhi.

At the Assembly of the World Council of Churches at New Delhi the Lutheran National Church of Denmark will be represented by the Bishop of Copenhagen W. Westergaard Madsen, the Bishop of Lolland-Falster Dr. H. Høgsbro, Professor N.H. Søe, Mrs. Edith Bender and Director Poul Engberg. Rev. Erik W. Nielsen will be present as advisor.

Parish Council on the Faroe Islands Divided on the Issue of an Assistant Bishop.

A ballot among the members of parish councils on the Faroe Islands shows that opinions are sharply divided on the matter of a special assistant bishop for the Islands. There were 142 votes in favour of such an office and 148 against. 36 ballot papers were blan 6 were in favour of an independent see on the Faroe Islands, and 11 parish council members did not take part in the ballot. The Faroese

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"Lagting"will now probably confer on the matter and may be expected, according to a statement in "Kristeligt Dagblad" by the Faroese Member of Parliament, Rev. Johan Nielsen, to propose the establishment of an office of Assistant Bishop of the Faroe Islands. So far the Islands have belonged directly under the Bishop of Copenhagen.

Third Episcopal Visitation to Greenland Since the Middle Ages.

The new Bishop of Copenhagen, Bishop W. Westergaard Madsen, has decided to go on a month's visitation to Greenland this summer alread The decision has been received with much pleasure in Greenland, not the least because this is only the third episcopal visitation to Greenland since the Middle Ages. The first one took place in 1923 and was conducted by Bishop Ostenfeld who only visited the district of Godthåb. In 1953 Bishop Fuglsang-Damgaard went on a somewhat longer tour of visitation, but Bishop Westergaard Madsen's tour is to be the most comprehensive yet, including travels by motorboat and aeroplane.

FINLAND

Visit by Hungarian Church Delegation.

Invited by the National Committee of the Lutheran World Federati in Finland a delegation of three from the Hungarian Lutheran Church has paid a ten days' visit to Finland. The delegation consisted of Bishop Zoltan Kaldy, Professor Enlö Ottlyk, Dean of the Theological Academy, and Dean Lajos Varady.

Delegation to New Delhi from Finland.

The delegation of the Lutheran National Church of Finland to the Assembly of the World Council of Churches at New Delhi will have the following composition: The Bishop of Tampere (Tammerfors) Dr. E.G. Gulin, Professor Aimo T. Nikolainen, Rev. O.T. Vuorela, Dr. Seppo A. Teinonen and Miss Inga-Brita Castrén, M.A. Mr. Risto Lehtonen, M.A., will take part in the Assembly as fraternal delegate from the Ecumenical Council of Finland.

Comments on the Message Received through Speaking with Tongues.

The Swedish religious weekly in Finland "Församlingsbladet" in an editorial comments upon the message received by a typist in Österbotten while speaking with tongues, the message later on having been printed and distributed all over Finland. As mentioned in the last number of CN, the main point of the message is that unless there are at least 800,000 true believers in Finland at the end of this year the nation will perish. The People will be driven from its country and foreigners invade and occupy it.

The "Församlingsbladet" points out that, although the ecstatic form as such is no guarantee of the truth of the message, something worth listening to may lie hidden under the unfamiliar form of expression. The message must be examined in the light of the Bible, such a test being particularly necessary in Österbotten where there have been sad experiences of the consequences of an uncritical faith in ecstatic preachers.

The paper wholeheartedly approves of the call for edification and faith contained in the message and of the view that a nation's power of resistance to a large extend depends on its Christian con-

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Comments on the Message Received through Pravda, with Reserve.

The Swedish religious weekly in Finland "Kristeligt Dagblad" in an editorial comment upon the message received by a Swiss Ambassador in Moscow while speaking with Stalin, says, the message later on never been printed and distributed all over Finland. As mentioned in the last number of CX, the main point of the message is that unless there are at least 800,000 tons delivered in Finland by the end of this year the nation will perish. The people will be driven from its country and foreigners invade and occupy it.

The "Kristeligt Dagblad" points out that, although the contents form as such is no guarantee of the truth or the meaning, something worth listening to may lie hidden under the original form of expression. The message must be examined in the light of the Bible, and it must being particularly necessary in matters where there have been and experience of the consequences of an unspiritual faith to negotiate treaties.

The paper wholeheartedly approves of the call for solidarity and faith contained in the message and of the view that a nation's power of resistance to a large extend depends on its Christian con-

viction. The more people there are who possess an ardent faith and the more sincere this faith is, the better the nation will be able to resist both inner and outer pressures. But as regards the rest of the message, it must be taken with much caution. It rather gives the impression of attempting to frighten people into action, the paper writes.

Extensive Family Consultation Service.

At present there are seven family consultation centres in Finland run by the Church, viz. in Helsinki (Helsingfors), Tampere (Tammerfors), Lahti (Lahtis), Turku (Åbo), Oulu (Uleåborg), and Rovaniemi. At the centres altogether 4,826 conversations with 1,475 persons took place last year. One third of the "clients" were men and two thirds women. Most of them had hardly been in touch with the Church before. They represented all classes of society.

The service is led by a committee under the chairmanship of Bishop Martti Simojoki. Rev. Matti Joensuu is in charge of the daily running. Two new consultation centres are to be established at Jyväskylä and Kuopio.

The "Väestöliitto" (People's Union) likewise has consultation centres in a number of towns, but they are run on purely medical and social lines.

Discussion on Clergymen and Politics.

A number of Members of the Finnish Parliament, clergymen as well as laymen, belonging to various Parties meet once a week for a common Bible class. Recently the ministers in Helsinki (Helsingfors) were invited to be present at a sitting in Parliament and were received with a speech of welcome by the Vice President, Dr. J. Virolainen. At the sitting a lively discussion on "Clergymen and Politics" was opened by Mr. Nestori Kaasalainen, M.P., and Dr. Olavi Lähteenmäki.

Bishop Simojoki on Socialism and Christianity.

The congregations of Helsinki (Helsingfors) recently arranged a course for clergymen and women theologians on the problems of Socialism and its present situation. At the conclusion of the course Bishop Simojoki, Helsinki (Helsingfors), said, among other things:

"Whereas Socialism seeks the reason for man's sufferings in the organization of society, the Church seeks it in the guilt of the individual. But Christianity does not close its eyes to the life of society and its problems. Socialism and Christianity are not opponents, nor equivalents, either. To the same extent as the Church administers her gifts, the Word and the Sacraments, in the right way, to the same extent she may speak and act in matters involving the Socialistic movements."

Finnish Management of Hebrew School in Jerusalem.

The Finnish Mission Director, Rev. Olavi Vuorela, has visited the Finnish mission station in Jerusalem which, among other things, runs a Hebrew school - supposed to be the only one of its kind in the world - with 5 teachers and 50 students. Mr. Aili Havas, M.A., has translated a number of books into Hebrew. There are plans for extending the work.

ICELAND

The Bishop of Iceland to New Delhi.

The Bishop of Iceland Dr. Sigurbjørn Einarsson will represent the Lutheran National Church of Iceland at the Assembly of the World Council of Churches at New Delhi.

Dr. Fridrik Fridriksson Dead.

One of Iceland's best known and most beloved churchmen, Fridrik Fridriksen, D.D., has died in Reykjavik, 92 years old. He was the founder of the Y.M.C.A. in Iceland and has written several hymns which may be found in the Icelandic hymn book.

Song Director Birkis Dead.

The Song Director Sigurdur Birkis, Reykjavik, has died 76 years old. He has started no less than 203 church choirs all over Iceland.

NORWAY

Heated Discussion on Women Pastors.

The ordination of the first woman pastor in Norway has given rise to an animated discussion on the matter everywhere in the country.

The Central Board of the "Clergymen's Association for Bible and Confession" has published a statement in which the conferring of Holy Orders on women is described as having been forced on the Church from outside. It is contrary to the whole church tradition and has been steadily opposed by a vast majority of the Norwegian Church. It must therefore be regarded as an illoyal act on the part of certain churchmen when they assent to assist in introducing a ministry by women. The statement refers to the Apostolic thesis which goes back to a "commandment of the Lord" that a woman may not be a teacher, i.e. be responsible for the public ministry of the word and the administration of sacraments in the congregation. Apart from purely administrative transactions, people are urged to refrain from any kind of co-operation with a woman minister, but at the same time to work for a reorganization of a women's diaconate in the Church.

Both the two religious daily papers "Vårt Land" in Oslo and "Dagen" in Bergen, have dissociated themselves from women ministers. In an editorial "Vårt Land" describes the permission given by the Government for the ordination of Mrs. Bjerkås as being tantamount to "throwing a flaming torch straight at the altar", and blames the Government for the present grave situation of the Church. In another leading article the paper emphasizes the responsibility of Bishop Schjelderup in performing the ordination. Other papers have expressed hearty approval of the event as an instance of broad-mindedness and tolerance, while still others have advocated caution in breaking with ancient church traditions.

The Government has now appointed Mrs. Bjerkås to be rector of the parish of Berg in the Diocese of Nord-Hålogaland. The parish is situated on the West side of the great island of Senja to the South West from Tromsö.

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Foreign Missions and Help to Developing Countries.

An interesting debate on the relation of foreign missions to the official Government assistance to developing countries recently took place in the Norwegian "Storting" (Parliament). The discussion was occasioned by a question to the Minister of Foreign Affairs whether it was contemplated to utilize the local knowledge of the missionaries employed in the various countries. The Minister, Mr. Halvard Lange, replied that the official aid must not be combined with any kind of religious influence, but that one ought to consider taking advantage of the experiences of the missionaries as well as including representatives of foreign mission on the administrative committee proposed to be established in Norway for the direction of the relief work.

In the course of debate it was emphasized several times that the populations of developing countries are in need not merely of material, but also of spiritual assistance. The Western countries, consequently, should not refrain from spiritual influence or this field would be left entirely to the Communists.

A Parliamentary Commission on Aid to Developing Countries appointed by the Government, has just proposed that this aid should be raised to 75 million Norwegian Crowns, which equals 1/4 % of the national income, and that the amount should continue to be increased year by year until reaching a total of 1 % of the national income.

Old Offertory Practice to be Reintroduced.

In 1958 the Bishops' Council approached the Church Department with a request that in churches where the parish council might wish it permission should be given to take the offertory by passing round collection plates or purses in the pews, as done in many other Churches and as the general practice was in old times in Norway.

The Department for Church and Education answered that this permission could not be granted, but now the Bishops have renewed their request, referring to, among other things, the unanimous recommendation of the Diocesan Council of Oslo and the Clergymen's Association of Oslo of reintroducing the old offertory practice in churches where the congregations might want it.

News in Brief:

- The biggest Methodist congregation in Oslo has erected a new church which was dedicated recently by Bishop Odd Hagen under the name of the Central Church. At the dedication service a choir dressed in special gowns led the singing.

- Also this year hundreds of Easter services were arranged in the mountains for the many thousands spending the Easter holidays there.

- Statistics made by the Norwegian Sunday School Board shows that there are altogether 4,385 Sunday schools with 265,191 pupils and 14,765 teachers in Norway.

- In a recent lecture Bishop Fridtjov Birkeli, Stavanger, has advocated that the Nobel Peace Prize be awarded to the South African leader Albert Luthuli.

SWEDEN

Scottish-Swedish Theological Conversations.

On April 4th-7th a theological conference was held at Sigtuna between delegates from the Scottish and the Swedish churches - eight from each side. Leader of the Scottish delegation was Principal Burleigh, moderator of the Church of Scotland, of the Swedish Archbishop Hultgren. The conference was a continuation of the theological contact between the two churches as carried on for several years, resulting in 1952 in a confirmation of the fact that members of one of them were admitted to communion within the other.

The topics under discussion were: "Intercommunion and Discipline", "Church and State" and "Modern Evangelism". Within the Church of Scotland discipline plays a more important part than within the Church of Sweden. With regard to the relation between church and state conditions in the two countries are similar, much stress being laid by the modern state on social welfare. The attitude and reactions of men towards church and Christian faith are therefore very much the same. In modern evangelism the experiences on both sides are quite congruent.

The conference was characterized by willingness to understand the different points of view and to further a closer contact between the two churches. On each topic an introductory address was given and the matter then discussed in small groups. Formal resolutions were not taken, but the recommendations for continued deliberations on theological and practical matters with the purpose of deepening the contact between the two churches were to be submitted to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland and the Swedish Bishops' Conference for further action.

Swedish Delegation to New Delhi.

At the Assembly of the World Council of Churches at New Delhi the Lutheran National Church of Sweden will be represented by the Archbishop of Uppsala Dr. Gunnar Hultgren, the Bishop of Stockholm Dr. Helge Ljungberg, Dr. C.G. Diehl, Director of the Board of Missions, Professor Bengt Sundkler, Dr. Ove Hassler, General Secretary of the Swedish Clergymen's Union, Mr. C.G. Boethius, Chief Editor of the magazine "Vår Kyrka", Mrs. Anne-Marie Thunberg, Social Secretary of the Swedish Ecumenical Council, and Rev. Gunnar Weman. The Mission Covenant Church of Sweden will be represented by Rev. Arvid Stenström, General Secretary, and Rev. Gösta Hedberg, Secretary for Foreign Mission. Other Swedish participants will be Professor Gustaf Wingren, Dr. Harry Johansson, Miss Maria Dillner and Dr. Erland Sundström.

"Calvary Not a Dance Hall".

On Good Friday the Swedish Television brough a transmission of the ballet "Biblical Pictures" in which was included a scene from Calvary. When some time ago a picture from this scene was published in the papers, a storm of protests sprang up all over Sweden. The strongest objections came from the Pentecostal Movement, but also other Free Church as well as some National Church circles have protested. The reaction may be characterized by a remark by the Editor Axel B. Svensson in the course of discussion: "Christianity should not be danced. Calvary is not a dance hall."

In spite of the many resolutions of protest received from a n associations and meetings, the Board of the Radio Corporation d ded to send the programme as planned, maintaining that there was uestion of blasphemy as the performance was of the same nature as outh German Nativity tableaus at Christmas, and that there has be o criticisms in England when the ballet was performed there three ears ago. After the performance the discussion in this matter ha o more been so excited as before.

Another discussion has taken place recently on Swedish Televi n a play called "The Trial of Jesus", the performance of which on heatre in Malmö has likewise caused a certain amount of indignati Press report to the effect that the Swedish actor Max von Sydow ake the part of Jesus in an American film about the life of Jesus ontributed to the spirited discussion on the relation of Christia o the stage, ballet, and screen.

oreign Missions Join in the Aid to Developing Countries.

The Committee set up by the Swedish Government to plan the Sw lish Aid to Developing Countries met recently for the first time. hose sitting on the Committee is a former missionary in India, Re Ingve Frykholm. At the opening meeting Professor Gunnar Myrdal ga an address on the need, the aim, and the problems of international lief work. In the course of his lecture the Professor expressed h warm and full admiration of the work of the Christian missionaries

At a future meeting of the Committee, at which issues of educa tion will be discussed, the Secretary of the Swedish Missionary Co cil Mr. Arvid Stenström has been invited to give a report on the e cation of teachers and hospital personnel provided by the Swedish missionary societies.

First Convent to be Founded in Sweden Since the Reformation.

The Swedish Government has now sanctioned the establishment of convent at Glumslöv in Scania for nuns belonging to the Roman Cath Carmelite Order. This is the first convent to be established in S den since the Reformation. The ban on monasteries and convents in duced at the time of Reformation was removed in 1957.

Sunday Schools on the Decline.

At the recent annual meeting of the Swedish Sunday School Cou at Jönköping statistics compiled by the Secretary showed that since 1955 the number of Sunday schools in Sweden has gone down by 118 a that there are 1,321 teachers and 4,587 children less than in 1955. This means a decline of 10 %. The total number of Sunday schools i roughly 11,000 with 37,000 teachers and 407,000 pupils. One of the few communities showing an increase is the Lutheran National Church which has established 376 new Sunday schools since 1955.

Almost 1/2 Million Copies of Free Church Weekly Papers.

A survey conducted by the Free Church Press agency in Sweden, the "Preclam Press", shows that the weekly periodicals published b the Free Churches, the Salvation Army, the Pentecostal Movement, a the Evangelical National Missionary Society total an edition of al 1/2 million copies. The highest circulation is that of the weekly "Svenska Journalen" with 144,000 copies.

Approaching Amalgamation of the Y.M.C.A. and the Y.W.C.A.?

At the moment a committee set up by the Y.M.C.A. and the Y.W.C.A. in Sweden is going into the matter of a possible amalgamation of the two organizations. The investigation is expected to be completed next year. One of the reasons given, among others, for wanting an integration is the feeling of family solidarity which is natural also to association life. Study circles, sports clubs and boy scouts and girl guide movements are already joint affairs.

Missionaries Ought to be University Trained.

At a meeting recently of the Swedish Missionary Council the new appointed Bishop of the Lutheran Church in Tanganyika, Professor Bengt Sundkler, said that as many missionary candidates as possible ought to be offered a university training. "Some of the future missionaries ought to have a training enabling them to concentrate especially on the encounters of different religions at a time when one may speak of a renaissance in this sphere", the prominent mission professor said.

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At the moment a committee set up by the Y.M.C.A. and the Y.W.C.A. in Sweden is going into the matter of a possible amalgamation of the two organisations. The investigation is expected to be completed next year. One of the reasons given, among others, for wanting an integration is the feeling of family solidarity which is natural also to association life. Study circles, sports clubs and boy scouts and girl guide movements are already joint efforts.

Missionaries Ought to be University Trained.

At a meeting recently of the Swedish Missionary Council the new appointed Bishop of the Lutheran Church in Tanganyika, Professor Bengt Sundkler, said that as many missionary candidates as possible ought to be offered a university training. "Some of the future missionaries ought to have a training enabling them to concentrate especially on the encounter of different religions at a time when one may speak of a renaissance in this sphere", the promising missionary professor said.